

Yajigrama Yatra

Where Srila Narottama Das Thakura, Shrinivasa Acharya and Ramchandra Kaviraj stayed



Yajigrama is a tiny village 4km from Katwa, viz. 1 hour from Navadvipa town or 2 hours' drive from Mayapur via road trip. Katwa is where Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu took *sannyasa* from Kesava Bharati. Yajigrama is important place connected with many most wonderful pastimes of three Vaishnava stalwarts - Srila Narottama Das Thakura, Srila Shrinivasa Acharya and Srila Ramchandra Kaviraj. After the disappearance of the manifest pastimes of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu and their associates, Srila Narottama Das Thakura, Shrinivasa Acharya and Sri Shyamananda Prabhu, under the instructions of Six Gosvami's of Vrindavana, propagated the Krishna Consciousness movement.

Both Narottama Das Thakura and Ramchandra Kaviraj were most intimate friends. In the famous Vaishnava song '*sri krishna caitanya prabhu daya koro more...*', Srila Narottama Das Thakura sings '*daya koro sri Acharya prabhu Shrinivasa, ramchandra sanga mage narottama das*'. Here Srila Narottama Das Thakura submits his humble plea to Shrinivasa Acharya that he wants the association of his friend Ramchandra Kaviraj. Srila Jiva Gosvami very much appreciated Sri Ramachandra Kaviraja's great devotion to Lord Krishna and therefore gave him the title 'Kaviraja'.

Ramachandra Kaviraj's First Meeting with Shrinivasa Acharya at Yajigrama

One day, Shrinivasa Acharya was sitting on the bank of a pond to the west of his house at Yajigrama when he saw a marriage party passing nearby. The bridegroom, who was being carried on a palanquin, was extremely attractive. His skin was the color of a golden *ketaki* flower, face was effulgent like the full moon, eyes were like lotus petals, and neck like a conch shell. He had a

slender waist, and well-shaped thighs. He wore silken cloth, had a garland of flowers, and his body was adorned with sandalwood paste.

Shrinivasa thought to himself, "*Is he the son of a Gandharva? Or Kamadev himself? Such a beautiful person should certainly utilize his life in the service of Lord Krishna. Otherwise what is the use of such extraordinary beauty?*"

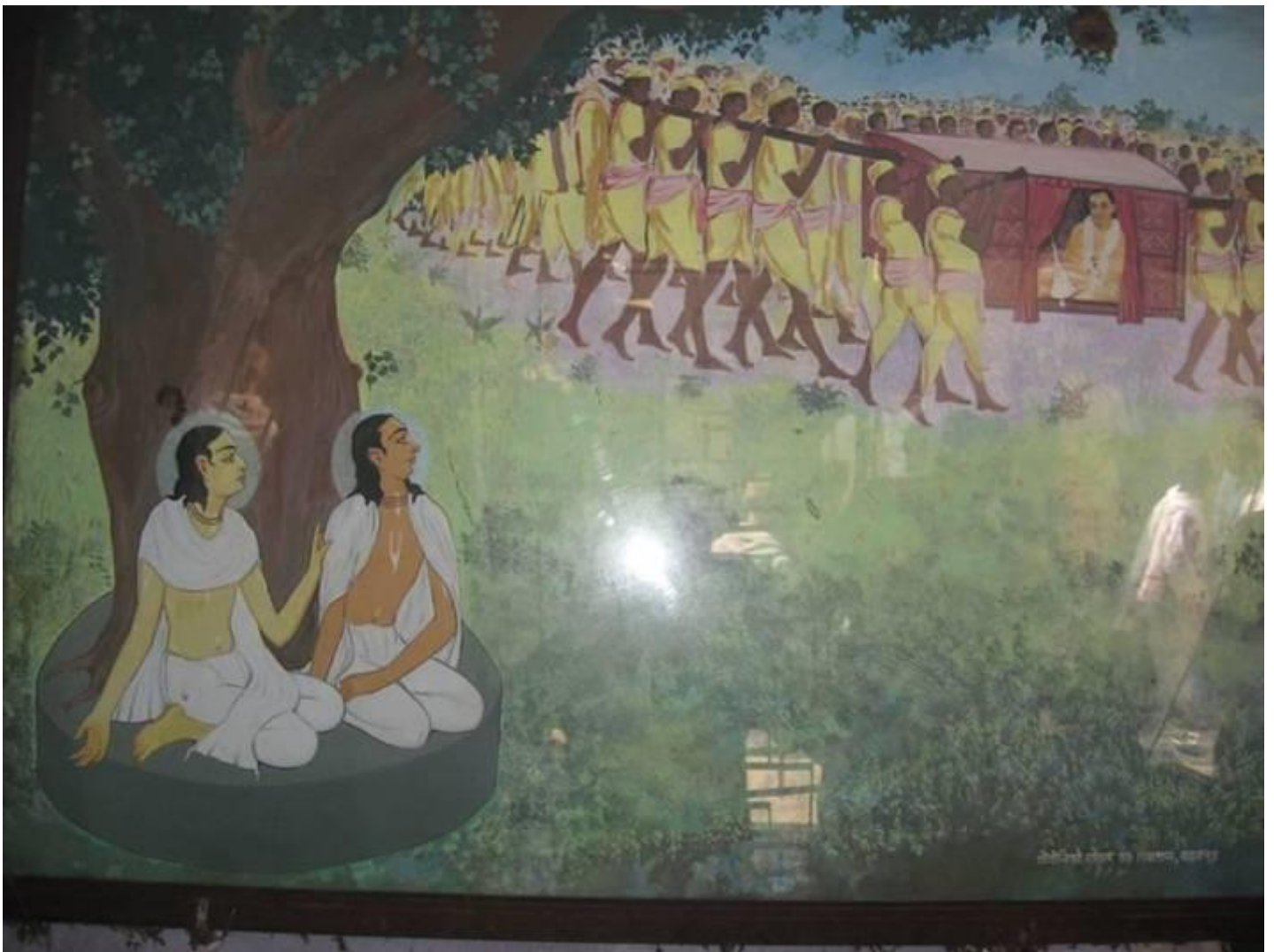
Shrinivasa inquired about the bridegroom from some members of the marriage party, and was informed that the young man was Sri Ramachandra Kaviraj, a great scholar with qualities equal to those of Brihaspati or Sarasvati. He belonged to a high-class family, was a famous physician, and was formerly a resident of Kumaranagar. After obtaining this information, Shrinivasa returned to his house, and Ramachandra, who had overheard Shrinivasa enquiries, returned to his place.

The whole night Ramachandra Kaviraj was thinking deeply about Shrinivasa Acharya and was extremely eager to meet him. However, her newly-wed wife requested him to wait till the morning and then go to meet Acharya. Early in the morning Ramachandra ran towards Yajigrama to meet Acharya. He was still wearing the overnight bridegroom clothes. As soon as he reached Shrinivasa Acharya's house he saw Narottama sweeping the courtyard. Ramachandra requested Narottama for a meeting with Shrinivasa Acharya, but seeing Ramachandra in unchanged overnight bridegroom clothes, Narottama chastised him, "Is this proper etiquette to meet an Acharya that you haven't even changed bridegroom clothes."

Meanwhile, Shrinivasa Acharya heard the conversation between Ramachandra and Narottama, and came to meet them. Seeing Shrinivasa Acharya, Ramachandra fell at his feet. Overwhelmed with emotion, he begged the blessings of Acharya. Shrinivasa lovingly lifted him from the ground and embraced him warmly.

Shrinivasa Acharya declared that they had a long, deep-rooted relationship, and were meeting again after a long separation. He then chanted *kṛṣṇa-nāma* in his ear and sang *rādhā-kṛṣṇa-līlā* to him. He also assisted Ramachandra in the study of *Vaishnava* literatures, and blessed him to become a dearest lover and devotee of Krishna. Shrinivasa told Ramachandra about the glories of Narottama. In due course of time, Narottama and Ramachandra became such good friends that people considered them to be like one soul.

Sri Govinda Das Kaviraj was the youngest brother of Ramachandra Kaviraj. He was also a stalwart devotee of Lord Krishna and had written several *Vaishnava* bhajans including famous '*Bhaja He Re Mana*'. Govinda Das initially worshipped Durga on account of his grandfather being a servitor of Durga. Seeing his elder brother Ramachandra jubilantly practicing and advancing in Krishna consciousness, he also deeply desired to worship Lord Krishna. Seeing unflinching desire of Govinda Das, Durga-devi one day appeared in his dream and blessed Govinda Das to take to devotion to Lord Krishna. Since Govinda Kaviraja, the author of two books, *Sangita-madhava* and *Gitamrita*, was a great *Vaishnava* kavi, or poet, Srila Jiva Gosvami gave him the title Kaviraja.



Shrinivasa Acharya and Narottama Das Thakura happen to see Ramachandra been carried in a palanquin during his marriage party

One day, as Shrinivasa was entering into the compound of his house with Ramachandra, they saw what appeared to be a snake. Shrinivasa jumped across it in fear. Ramachandra Kaviraj searched for the snake but was unable to find it. Rather, he discovered that Prabhu had mistaken a coil of straw to be a snake. Nevertheless, he did not contradict his master. When Shrinivasa himself discovered that it was a coil of straw and pointed it out, Ramachandra at once accepted his opinion. Later, when the wife of Shrinivasa were resting, Sri Acharya came and began to explain the exalted characteristics of Ramachandra. He compared Ramachandra to Arjuna by citing a story from the Mahabharata.

Shrinivasa took great pleasure in describing this incident and comparing Kaviraj to Arjuna. Ramachandra never disobeyed his master. He always sincerely listened to Prabhu, even when the latter ordered him to take his food after everyone else. Shrinivasa further described Ramachandra's faithfulness by citing the time when he himself had mistaken a coil of straw to be a snake, and although Ramachandra knew this, he nevertheless tried to find the snake in the courtyard as ordered by Shrinivasa.

Yet, when Prabhu told him that it was a coil of straw, not a snake, Ramachandra at once accepted his master's opinion. Ramachandra humbly submitted himself to Shrinivasa, saying that without the favor of his master, how could he know what was right or wrong? Thus Shrinivasa openly declared that just as Arjuna was the dearest disciple of Dronacharya. "From now on," Shrinivasa said, "everyone should take it for granted that Ramachandra's opinion is the same as mine." Shrinivasa explained that Ramachandra and Narottama were like his two eyes. Shrinivasa said, "He who receives the favor of Ramachandra also attains the blessings of Lord Krishna."

Srila Narottama Das Thakura

Narottama-vilasa, compiled by Srila Narahari Thakura narrates: One day while Lord Caitanya was dancing with His associates during Sankirtana, He suddenly looked in the direction of Kheturi village (now in Bangladesh). A peculiar look appeared on His face, tears swelled in His eyes and He cried out the name "*Narottama! Narottama!*" again and again. The ocean of mercy, Nityananda Prabhu shouted in joy, and Haridasa Thakura, Vakresvara and others were inexplicably filled with happiness.

Witnessing the unusual behaviour of the Lord, the devotees began talking amongst themselves: "*Mahaprabhu is repeatedly calling out the name of someone called Narottama. It seems that this Narottama is extremely dear to the Lord, perhaps he is about to take birth soon. Oh, who is that fortunate man who will have such a son? The woman who bears him within her womb is the most fortunate lady in the world. Obviously, the Lord has plans for this Narottama to fulfil His mission.*" In this way the rumours of the appearance of Narottama spread far and wide.

The songs of Srila Narottama Das Thakura are accepted by great Vaishnava authorities like Srila Visvanatha Cakravarti Thakura, as the Vedic evidence and to be as good as the *Vedas*. The Six Goswamis of Vrindavana wrote vast number of scriptures according to the order of Lord Caitanya. In the same way, following in the footsteps of the Goswamis, Srila Narottama Das Thakura and Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura, out of compassion for the fallen people of this age, composed their songs in simple Bengali language. These songs are the pinnacle of devotion. By singing and listening to these songs, one can discover the lost treasure of pure love to Supreme Lord.

Two most prominent works of Narottama Das Thakura are: *Prarthana* and *Prema-Bhakti-Candrika*. They are in reality the outpourings of a pure heart crying in separation from Gauranga Mahaprabhu and Radha-Govinda. *Bhajans* of Srila Narottama Das Thakura are full of humility, eagerness and anxiety for devotional perfection. Although Srila Narottama Das Thakura was a devotee of highest order, he composed these books placing himself on the level of a conditioned soul who is crying for the mercy of the Lord, because of his forgetfulness since time immemorial. Singing these songs causes the mind to reflect the mood of pure devotion, and the heart to feel intense separation from Sri Sri Radha and Krishna.

Srila Gaura-kisora Dasa Babaji was once asked how to develop love of God, to which he replied, "*It costs only five annas.*" The inquirer did not know the meaning of Babaji Maharaj's statement. Srila Gaura-kisora Dasa Babaji repeated himself, and then told the inquirer to go to the market with 5 annas and purchase two books by Srila Narottama Das Thakura: *Prarthana* and *Prema-Bhakti-Candrika*. He instructed that by reading and meditating on the contents of these two books daily, one will develop love of God.

Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati Thakura used to tell his disciples that to attain the perfection of life they must know, practice and realize the teachings contained within three books: *Prarthana*, *Prema-Bhakti-Candrika* and *Upadesamrta*.

Once after taking initiation from Srila Lokanatha Gosvami, Narottama Das Thakura sat in a Vraja nikunja absorbed in bhajana. Suddenly Srimati Radhika appeared before him and request: "*Your eternal service is to come to My kunja and stir milk for My Pranavallabha. Since Campakalata also does this service, your name will be Campaka-manjari.*" When Lokanatha Gosvami heard about this, he became ecstatic, and confirmed that indeed this was Narottama Das Thakura's eternal service to Sri Sri Radha and Krishna.

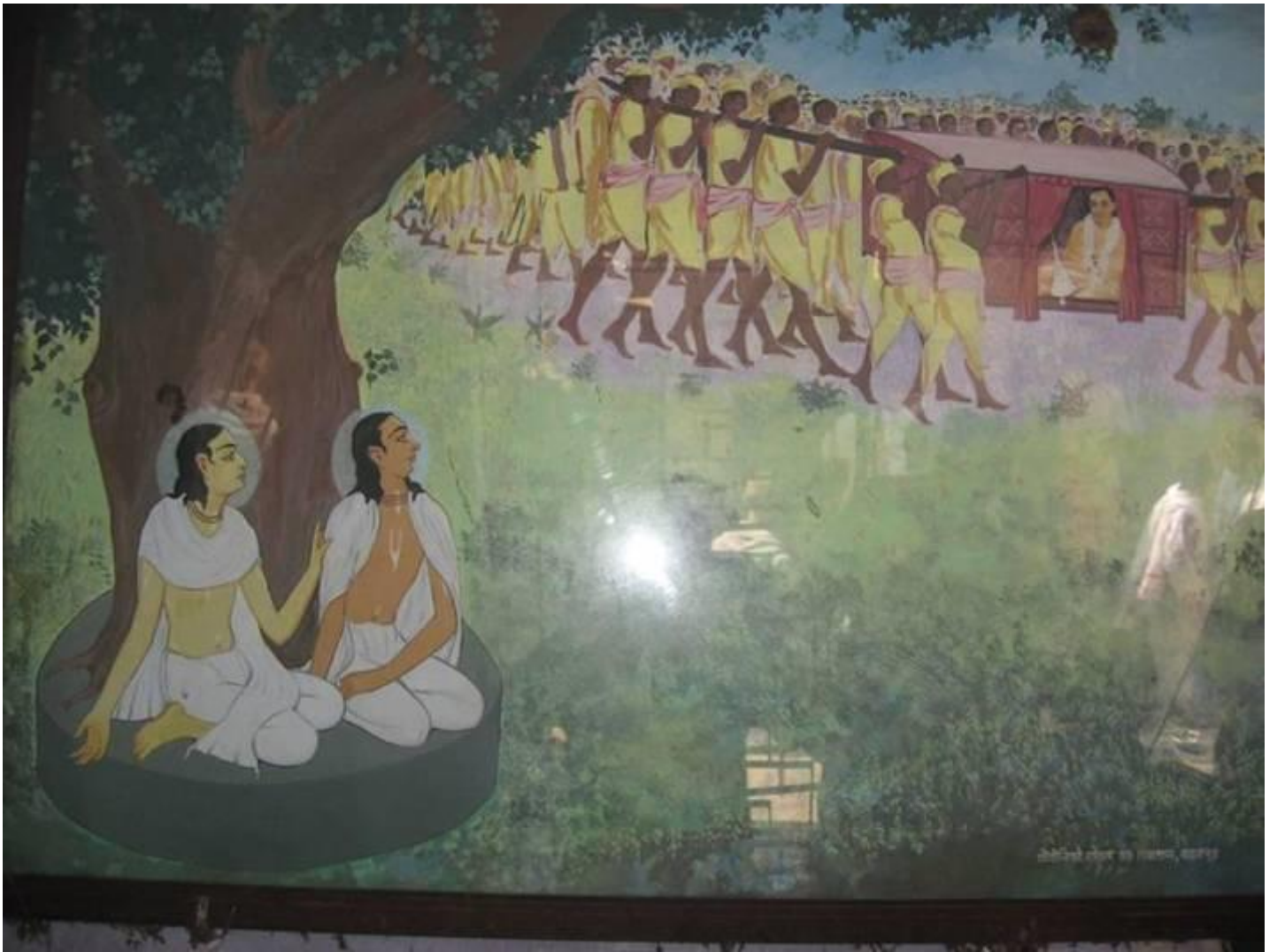
"*So read Narottama Das Thakura's Prarthana, Bhaktivinoda Thakura's Prarthana. They are very, very valuable for advancement of spiritual understanding, especially Narottama Das Thakura's Prarthana. So, by reading them, by understanding them, we can understand*

Krishna very easily. Otherwise, it is very, very difficult to understand Lord Sri Krishna.” -- Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

At Katwa, there is **Sri Gauranga Bari Temple** where Lord Caitanya took sannyasa. Also, at Katwa there is **Madhai Tala temple** about 3 km from Sri Gauranga Bari Temple. Here there are tombs of two brothers, Jagai and Madhai, in a place known as *Ghosahata*, or *Madhaitala-grama*. It is said that Sri Gopicarana dasa Babaji established a temple of Nitai-Gaura at this place about 250 years ago. Jagai and Madhai were two brothers born in Navadvipa in a respectable *brahmana* family who later became addicted to all kinds of sinful activities. *Sri Caitanya Caritamrta* *Adi-lila* chapter 10 verse 120 mentions: Jagai and Madhai, the 89th and 90th branches of the tree, were the greatest recipients of Lord Caitanya’s mercy. These two brothers were the witnesses who proved that Lord Caitanya was rightly named *Patita-pavana*, “the deliverer of the fallen souls.”



Entrance to Shrinivasa Acharya's house at Yajigrama



Marriage party of Ramachandra Kaviraj

(very important pastime connected with Shrinivasa Acharya, Ramachandra Kaviraj and Narottama Das Thakura as mentioned above)



Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga Mahaprabhu at the main altar of Shrinivasa Acharya's house



Their Lordships Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga Mahaprabhu



Sri Sri Radha Krishna deities



Shrinivasa Acharya's Bhajan Kutir at Yajigrama



Srila Narottama Das Thakura, Srila Shrinivasa Acharya and Srila Ramachandra Kaviraj



Narottama Das Thakura and Ramachandra Kaviraj



Srila Narottama Das Thakura and Srila Shrinivasa Acharya



Srila Narottama Das Thakura



Transcendentalists discussing the glories of three most exalted Vaishnavas Srila Narottama Das Thakura, Srila Shrinivasa Acharya and Srila Ramachandra Kaviraj during Yajigrama Yatra



Neem tree that grew from Srila Shrinivasa Acharya's toothbrush



Neem tree that grew from Srila Shrinivasa Acharya's toothbrush



Neem tree that grew from Srila Shrinivasa Acharya's toothbrush



Peela Pukur (Yellow pond) at Srila Shrinivasa Acharya's house at Yajigrama



Devotees visiting Srila Shrinivasa Acharya's house at Yajigrama

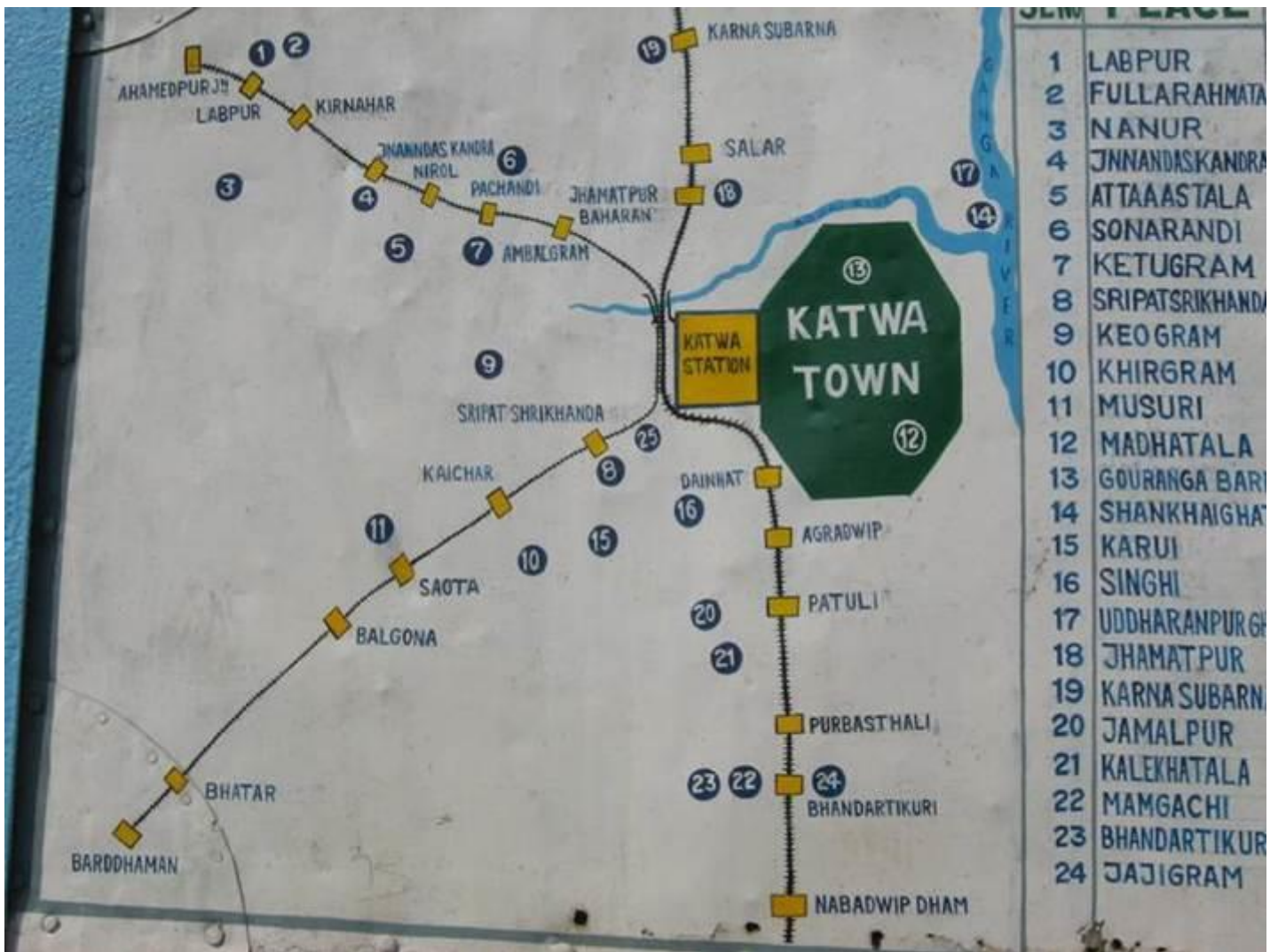


Yajigrama Yatra



Places of interest near Katwa

Around Katwa there is Sri Gauranga Bari Temple where Lord Caitanya took sannyasa; Madhai Tala Temple [where the tombs of these two brothers, Jagai and Madhai are there]; Sri Path of Narahari Sarkar and Raghunandan Thakura; Yajigrama is 4kms from Katwa.



Katwa map and places of interest

Katwa is about an hour's distance from Sridham Mayapur.

Life and Pastimes of Paramahansa Srila Narottama Das Thakura Mahasaya

Srila Narottama Das Thakura's Appearance and childhood

On the banks of the Padmavati river, in the town of Gopalpura lived King Krsnanda Datta and his wife Narayani Devi. His older brother was Purusottama Datta. The wealth and fame of these two brothers was beyond compare. In the month of Magha, on the day of *sukla-pancami*, in 1531 AD, Srila Narottama Dasa Thakura took his birth. Seeing many auspicious omens surrounding the birth of his son, Raja Krsnananda was very pleased, and gave lavishly in charity to the brahmanas. Brahmanas, seeing all the auspicious signs surrounding the child's birth, prophesied that the boy was a highly perfected soul and great personality, by whose influence many people would be delivered. Just as a crescent moon gradually becomes full the king's son grew more effulgent and beautiful with each passing day. His bodily lustre was like molten gold. His eyes were large and shaped like lotus petals. His arms extended to his knees and he had a deep navel. All these are the bodily symptoms of a *maha-purusa*, a great personality. All the local townspeople used to gather to take darshan of the beautiful and saintly child. Soon, the boy's *anna-prasanna-samskara*, or grain-eating ceremony was held.

Narayani Devi, having given birth to such a wonderful son was floating in the ocean of ecstasy. The boy was extremely peaceful. Within the lady's quarters, the ladies used to nurture and care for the child with great ecstasy. Gradually the day of his entrance into school (Hate-Khari) approached. As his schooling went on, everyone was astonished at his amazing intelligence. Simply by hearing a subject once from his gurus he would commit it to memory. In only a short time, he mastered the study of Sanskrit grammar, poetry, rhetoric, and became expert in many different scriptures. But gradually he saw as useless any

knowledge which did not promote Hari-bhajan, and soon lost interest in everything but Krishna consciousness. He found that in previous times the learned, who understood what real knowledge is, left everything, renouncing the world of birth and death, and went off to the forest in order to worship the Supreme Lord, Hari. Day after day, Narottama began to think of how he could become free from family life and constantly engage himself in the Lord's service. He was indifferent to all material enjoyment; where most children usually like to play, he was uninterested. At this time, hearing the glories of Sri Nityananda and Sri Gauranga, from the lotus lips of the devotees of the Lord, his heart was filled with spiritual joy. As if he had been given new life, he felt great ecstasy. Within a few days of hearing the wonderful qualities of Gaura and Nityananda, he began to chant their holy names in japa day and night. One night the merciful Sri Gaurasundara, surrounded by his eternal associates appeared to Narottama in a dream and gave him darshan.

Srila Narottama Das Thakura's intense separation from Sri Vrindavana Dhama

After this, in order to understand how to become free from family life, Narottama das Thakura began to think day and night of how he could go to Vrindavana. He prayed, "Hari Hari! kabe haba Vrindavana vasi?" *O Hari, when will I become a resident of Vrindavana? When will I serve the beautiful divine couple in Vrindavana with tears in my eyes?* In this way, Narottama would constantly sing. Seeing Narottama's indifference to all sense pleasure and his intense renunciation, King Krishnananda and Narayani Devi began to think about what to do with him. Seeing that he was not inclined towards family life, and that he might soon leave home unexpectedly to go to Vrindavana they became very worried. They employed a guard to watch over him, so that he couldn't leave. Narottama Das saw that the difficulties involved in escaping were becoming more impassable than the Himalayas, and thought that he might never be able to go to Vrindavana and absorb himself in the worship of the holy feet of Sri Gauranga. *Thinking only of how to get the mercy of Sri Gaura-Nityananda, he began to pray very earnestly for guidance from them.* And so it came to pass that some messengers came from the Ruler of Bengal, informing King Krishnananda that the ruler of Bengal wanted to meet with him. In order to meet with the Ruler of Bengal, Raja Krishnananda and his brother Purushottama Datta set out on a long journey to the court of the Ruler of Bengal.

Narottama took advantage of the moment, thinking it to be a good opportunity to leave home. At that time, he secretly left his mother and his protectors, turned towards Vrindavana and began his journey to that holy land. It was on the full moon day in the month of Kartika that Narottama Thakura left his family behind. Passing through Bengal in a short time, he soon found himself on the road to Mathura. All the other pilgrims he would meet were very affectionate toward Narottama, as they could recognize him as the son of the king. He would sometimes live by drinking milk and sometimes would eat the roots and fruits as he went along. His constant hankering to see Vrindavana made his hunger and thirst go away. As he moved from place to place, he would hear the glories of Gaura and Nityananda from the mouths of many devotees. In this way he was always thinking about their lotus feet, constantly absorbed in meditation. As he walked and walked, he prayed to the lotus feet of Sri Nityananda Prabhu, as he has written: *"ara kabe nitai chand...." "When will Nityananda show his mercy to me and free me from the world of birth and death? By his mercy one may give up material enjoyment and purify his mind. In this way, by the mercy of Sri Nityananda Prabhu, one can attain Vrindavana."*

Srila Narottama Das Thakura in Sri Vrindavana Dhama

In this way, walking and walking, Narottama das arrived in Mathura and seeing the Yamuna, he offered many prayers. Remembering the Six Goswamis headed by Sri Rupa and Sri Sanatana, he began to weep in ecstasy. Gradually he came to Vrindavana. He was sent by Sri Jiva Goswami to serve the lotus feet of Lokanatha Goswami. Lord Caitanya had already foretold the initiation of Narottama by Lokanatha Goswami. In *Narottama-vilasa*, it is stated: "Within a short period of time a prince named Narottama will become your disciple. He will be a gifted devotee, full of love and devotion, and empowered to save the fallen conditioned souls from hellish life. His enchanting beautiful kirtana will melt even wood or stone."

Lokanatha Goswami was so deeply agonized by the pain of separation from Sri Gauranga that it was as if his very life had been taken away. Narottama offered his obeisances to the lotus feet of Srila Lokanatha and Lokanatha asked him, "Who are you?" Narottama said, "I am your fallen servant. I wish to serve your lotus feet." Lokanatha replied, "How can I, who am unable to serve Gaura-Nityananda, accept any service?" It so happened that Lokanatha Goswami was determined not to accept any disciple, so following this vow, he declined to accept any disciple. But Narottama was very determined to have the shelter of him. After this, Narottama would secretly go in the middle of the night to the place where Lokanatha Goswami would pass stool and urine. He cleanse the area, maintaining everything there very nicely. After a year of serving in this way, his service was recognized by Lokanatha Goswami, and he bestowed his mercy upon Narottama and initiated him as his disciple.

Narottama used to eat by practicing *madhukari*, and would study the Goswami scriptures under the guidance of Srila Jiva Goswami. Shrinivasa Acharya was his dear friend, and together the two of them used to study under Jiva Goswami. At that time Shyamananda Prabhu arrived from Gauda-Desh, and he also began studying the Goswami's scriptures under the guidance of Jiva Goswami. These three with one mind performed their *bhajana* in Vrindavana and yet still they felt that their inner aspiration had not attained its complete fulfilment. One day Jiva Goswami called the three of them to him and said "In the future, you must preach the message of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu far and wide. Taking the literatures of the Goswamis you must quickly go to Bengal and begin preaching."

Srila Narottama Das Thakura's Journey to Bengal

The three of them, Narottama, Shrinivasa and Shyamananda, gave up their residence in Vrindavana and accepted the order of their guru on their heads. Taking the treasured scriptures of the Goswamis with them they started on their journey to Bengal. As continued on their way, gradually they came to Vanavishnupur. In Vanavishnupur lived a king of dacoits and thieves named Sri Birhambira. At night he had the scriptures stolen, thinking them to be treasure of some kind. When they awoke in the morning and saw the scriptures stolen, awakening in the morning and seeing the scriptures stolen, Narottama, Shrinivasa and Shyamananda felt as if their heads had been hit by a thunderbolt. Miserable beyond description, they all began searching the four directions for the scriptures, until finally news came to them that King Birhambira had stolen the books and was keeping them hidden in his royal storehouse. At this, it was decided among the three that Sri Shyamananda would head for Utkala, and Narottama started for Kheturi-grama, while Shrinivasa stayed behind, thinking to some ways to deliver the Goswami's books from the King's storehouse.

Srila Narottama Das Thakura's at Sridham Mayapur

In order to see the holy birthplace of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Narottama went to quickly visit Navadvipa Dhama. Arriving there, he began chanting "O Gaurahari! O Gaurahari!" on the banks of the Ganges hundreds and hundreds of times and offered many prayers to the Lord. Sitting beneath the shade of a Tal tree, he began to wonder "Where is the actual place of Sri Caitanya's birth?" He sat there for some time, thinking of what to see next. Just then, an old *brahmana* happened to walk by. Narottama rose to his feet to show respect to the brahmana. The brahmana said, "Baba, from where have you come? What is your name?" Narottama introduced himself and expressed his desire to see the holy birthplace of Sri Caitanya. The *brahmana* replied, "Today my life has become auspicious, for before my eyes is a dear devotee of Sri Caitanya."

Narottama said, "Baba! You have seen Lord Caitanya?" The brahmana replied, "What are you saying! Every day Nimai Pandit sits with his disciples at this *ghat* and discusses the *sastra*, and then, from a distance I watch him and wonder at the beauty of his divine form. Today I remember seeing that very form sitting beneath this tree here, where he sits every day." As the brahmana spoke, tears of ecstasy poured from his eyes. Narottama said, "Baba! It is the fortune of a lifetime that I have beheld you with these eyes." Saying this, tears fell from his eyes also, and falling to the ground, Narottama touched the brahmana's feet to his head. Brahmana said, "Baba! I give you my blessings that soon you will attain devotion to the lotus feet of Govinda. At that time, you will preach the glories of Gaura-Govinda far and wide." After

this, the *brahmana* showed Narottama Das the path to where the house of Jagannatha Mishra was. Finding that path, Sri Narottama walked until he came to the house of Jagannatha Mishra. Arriving at the house of Jagannatha Mishra, he fell down at the door with tears in his eyes and offered his full obeisances, while reciting various prayers in glorification of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Entering within the house he had *darshan* of the lotus feet of Shuklambara Brahmachari. Narottama offered his respects to his feet.

From different signs, Suklambara Cakravarti could understand that Narottama was an agent of Sri Caitanya's mercy. He asked, "Who are you?" Narottama introduced himself, explaining that he had been living in Vrindavana under the care of Jiva Gosvami and Lokanatha Gosvami, and that he had just arrived in Navadvipa. Suklambara said, "Baba, you have come from Vrindavana? You were with Lokanatha and Jiva Gosvami?" At length, he made Narottama rise, and embraced him heartily, barraging him with endless questions about the well-being, activities, and good health of the Goswamis. In this way he talked on and on with Narottama, as he wanted to hear all about Vrindavana and everything that was going on there.

Finally, Narottama got to meet Isana Thakura, the old servant of Sri Sacimata, and upon meeting him, he offered his prayers of respect at his holy feet and introduced himself. Sri Isana Thakura touched Narottama's head, bestowing his blessings upon him, and then embraced him affectionately. Then, he went to the house of Shrivasa Pandita and offered his respects to Sripati and Srinidhi Pandita. All of them affectionately embraced Narottama.

Narottama Das in Santipur at Sri Advaita Acharya's house

After staying for a few days in Mayapur, Narottama went to visit the house of Sri Advaita Acharya in Santipur. There he offered his respects at the lotus feet of Srila Acyutananda. Acyutananda introduced himself and inquired after the health and wellbeing of the Vrindavana Goswamis. After staying in Santipur for 2 days, he went on to Ambika Kalna to the house of Gauridasa Pandita. At that time, Sri Hridaya Caitanya Prabhu was staying there who was the disciple of Gauridasa Pandit. Sri Narottama offered his respects to Hridaya Caitanya. The two of them affectionately embraced and Narottama gave him news of the activities of the Goswamis in Vrindavana. After staying in Ambika Kalna for a day, he went on to the place where the Ganges, Yamuna, and Sarasvati meet, a village called Saptagram. In that place Uddharana Datta Thakura lived. Sri Nityananda Prabhu had previously given his mercy to the residents of Saptagram, and so all the people there were great devotees. After the disappearance of Uddharana Datta Thakura, the people in the village felt like they had lost their vision. Sri Narottama went to the house of Uddharana Datta Thakura and there, he found that the devotees were absorbed in separation from their guru, in great agony passing their days. Narottama offered his respects to all the Vaishnavas there and continued on his way to Kharadaha Gram.

In Kharadaha Gram, Sri Nityananda Prabhu had a residence where his two energies, Sri Vasudha and Jahnava Devi lived. Sri Narottama went to the house of Lord Nityananda and remembering the sublime holy name of Lord Nityananda his voice choked up in ecstasy. Sri Parameshvari Das Thakura took Sri Narottama within the inner portion of the house reserved for women and brought him to the lotus feet of Sri Jahnava Mata and Sri Vasudha. Having been introduced to Narottama, who they could understand had received the mercy of Lokanatha and Jiva Goswami, they bestowed their mercy upon him. It is said in the *Bhakti-Ratnakara* that both Vasudha, who was the knower of all truths, and Sri Jahnava, who is the Supreme Mistress, bestowed their incomparable mercy upon Narottama.

Four days later, Narottama, after having spent much time discussing *Krishna-katha* in great ecstasy with Sri Jahnava and Vasudha, bade them farewell and left for the town of Khanakula Krishna-nagara to see the place of Abhirama Gopal Thakura. Having met him, Narottama offered his respects to the holy feet of Abhirama Gopal. He was passing his days in the great pain of separation from Sri Caitanya and Nityananda. He had become extremely internal, barely spending any time in the plane of external consciousness. Seeing him in that condition, Narottama wept a great deal. The Gopinatha deity of Abhirama Thakura was wonderful to see. Narottama took *darshan* of the deity and recited many prayers and verses in praise of the

Lord before the deity. Next day, after taking his leave of the house of Abhirama Gopal, Narottama had some inspiration from within and set out for Jagannatha Puri.

Srila Narottama Das Thakura's at Sri Kestra Jagannatha Puri Dhama

Constantly absorbed in thinking of the eternal associates of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, it seemed to Narottama that he reached in Jagannatha Puri in no time at all. Sri Gopinath Acharya and many other devotees, seeing Narottama on the path, all went out to greet him on the road. In this way, surrounded by devotees, he arrived in Jagannatha Puri. After Sri Narottama had paid his obeisances at the lotus feet of Gopinatha Acharya and the Acharya warmly embraced him and said, "This very day I was hoping that you might arrive." Soon Narottama and all the devotees from Vrindavana and Bengal began talking on and on about Lord Krishna, Gauranga, the Gosvamis and many other things. All the devotees were very happy to have Narottama in their midst, and they took him to have darshan in the temple of Jagannatha.

While taking *darshan* of Jagannatha, Baladeva and Subhadra, Narottama offered many prayers in their glorification and bowed down before them again and again. After this he went to the *samadhi* of Srila Haridasa Thakura and upon arriving there began to drown in the ocean of *Sri Krishna-prema*. After this he went to the house of Gadadhara Pandita, and began to shout at the top of his lungs in a loud voice, "O life and soul of Gauranga! O Gadadhara!" Thereafter he took *darshan* of Sri Sri Tota Gopinatha and offered his respects at the lotus feet of Sri Mamu Goswami Thakura who was at that time engaged in the service of Sri Tota Gopinatha.

Thereafter, Narottama drew near to that part of the Gopinatha deity where it is said that Mahaprabhu entered into, when He disappeared from this earth by entering into the Sri Tota Gopinatha deity in the presence of His devotees. This is recorded in *Bhakti-Ratnakara*: "*It is difficult to understand the movements of that crown jewel of sannyasis, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Upon His disappearance, all of a sudden, the earth became dark. He entered into the Gopinatha Mandir and never came out. In this way He left the visible plane and entered into the invisible plane.* (Bhakti-Ratnakara 8:357)

Upon hearing of the disappearance of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Narottama said, "O Sachinandana, O Gaurahari!" and fell unconscious on the ground. Seeing Narottama's bewildered state of separation from the Lord, all the devotees began crying tears of *prema*. After this, Narottama went to the house of Kashi Mishra, took *darshan* of the generous lotus feet of Sri Gopala Guru Gosvami and saw the deities at the Sri Sri Radha-Kanta Temple. After this he went to the Gundica temple for *darshan*, and remembered the Lord's pastimes in the Jagannatha-vallabha gardens. Then he visited the Narendra Sarovara, and many other places. After a few days, having experienced great transcendental bliss in the association of the devotees of Jagannatha Puri, and having visited all the places of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's pastimes, he took his leave of the devotees and left for Sri Nrishingapura. Once there, he went to Shyamananda Prabhu's house. Seeing Narottama after such a long time, Shyamananda Prabhu was floating in the ocean of ecstasy. In the ecstasy of Krishna-prema the two of them joyfully embraced one another.

Shyamananda Prabhu, out of affection kept Narottama in Nrishingapura for many days, not allowing him to leave. Sri Narottama sanctified the town of Nrishingapura by drowning everyone there in a nectarine flood of *sankirtana*. Together Shyamananda and Narottama would go on discussing *Krishna-katha* in great ecstasy, without any knowledge of whether it was day or night. After some time, Sri Narottama Thakurs bade farewell to Sri Shyamananda Prabhu and set out for Gaudadesha.

He quickly came to Sri Khanda. There he offered his respects to the lotus feet of Sri Narahari Sarkara Thakura and Sri Raghunandana. Sri Narahari Sarkara Thakura had great affection for Narottama's father, Sri Krishnananda. Offering his respects to Narottama in return, Narahari blessed him many times, touching him on the head with his hand. Sri Raghunandana embraced him affectionately. They asked him to tell them all about the devotees in Jagannatha Puri. In this way, Narottama went from one place to the next in Sri Khanda, his

transcendental pleasure always increasing. Narottama spent many days in Sri Khanda in great happiness, performing *Sankirtana* and dancing in the association of the devotees there.

Bidding farewell to all the eternal associates of Mahaprabhu in Sri Khanda, he went on to Kanthak Nagara, to the house of Gadadhara Das Thakura. He fell before the house of Gadadhara Das, offering his respects, and Gadadhara Das affectionately embraced him. The Bhakti Ratnakara says, "Seeing Narottama, Gadadhara Das embraced him with great affection, wetting his body with tears of joy." Sri Gadadhara Das Prabhu was passing his days in the pain of separation from Gaura-Nityananda. Narottama Thakura stayed there for 2 days, and then left to see the birthplace of Sri Nityananda Prabhu in the Radhadesh.

Narottama went to Ekachakra Gram to visit the holy place of Nityananda's birth. There, an old brahmana who was affectionately disposed towards Narottama showed him the different holy places where Nityananda had performed his *lila*. Remembering the holy names of Hadai Pandit and Padmavati Devi, Narottama fell to the ground, his voice choked up with ecstasy. After seeing the holy birthplace of Lord Nityananda, Narottama started out for Kheturi Gram.

As the Bhakti Ratnakara says, "After inquiring about the way to Kheturi Gram from the local people, he quickly came to the banks of the Padmavati. Crossing over the Padmavati, he arrived in Kheturi. Upon his arrival, all the people of the village wanted to be the first to meet him." Since Narottama had been away for so long, there was a big welcoming celebration. Hearing of his arrival, the residents of Kheturi Gram all began making preparations to welcome him. Raja Krishnananda and Sri Purushottama Datta, the father and uncle of Narottama had already passed away, and had gone back to the spiritual world. Purushottama Datta, Narottama's uncle had a son whose name was Sri Santosa Datta. After the passing of King Krishnananda and Purushottama, he was shown much wealth and material enjoyment. Santosa was the foremost of saintly persons in the village. When he heard that Narottama Thakura was about to bless that town with his holy footsteps after such a long time, in order to be the first one to greet Narottama, he rushed out with the rest of the devotees to wait for him on the road outside Kheturi Gram.

After some time, Narottama could be seen in the distance. Upon seeing him, Santosa, after bowing prostrate with full obeisances, went forward with tears of ecstasy in his eyes, falling on the ground again and again to take the dust of Narottama's lotus feet. At this, Narottama affectionately embraced Santosa and asked how he had been faring all this time. Narottama asked King Santosa many questions about his health, happiness and well-being. A few days later, Narottama Thakura initiated Santosa with the Radha-Krishna mantra. Raja Santosa Datta had previously wanted that a temple to be built and a deity installed. Now he begged at Narottama Thakura's lotus feet for his permission. Narottama gladly gave his approval.

Within a few months, Raja Santosa Datta had seen to it that a large temple was built. The temple compound included a big storehouse for food, a *kirtan* hall, a residence hall and ashram for devotees, a bathing pond, a beautiful flower garden, and a guest house. On the full moon day of Phalgun on the festival day of Mahaprabhu's appearance the temple was dedicated and the deities were installed and a great festival, which can only be compared to the Rajasuya-yajna of Yudhishthira Maharaja in its vast expansiveness, began and was celebrated for miles around. Messengers were sent out for miles around Kheturi Gram, to near and distant lands, to invite kings, landowners, poets, pandits, Vaishnavas, authors, as well as many other illustrious guests. Some were sent far and wide to invite the topmost singers and orators. Preparations were made to install six deities at one time.

The Great Festival of Kheturi Gram

In Buddhari Gram, at the house of Govinda Kaviraja, the news came of the festival. All the devotees there along with Shrinivasa Acharya soon set out for an auspicious visit to the great festival in Kheturi Gram. Within a few days, from Nrishingapura in Orissa came Sri Shyamananda Prabhu, from Khoradoha came Sri Jahnava Mata and Sri Parameshvari Das, Krishnadas Sarakhel, Madhava Acharya, Raghupati Vaidya, Minadekana Rama Das, Murari Caitanya Das, Jnana Das, Mahidhara, Sri Sankara, Kamala Kara Pippalai, Gauranga Das,

Nakari, Krishna Das, Damodara, Balarama Das, Sri Mukunda, and Sri Vrindavana Das Thakura. From Sri Khanda came Sri Raghunandana and many other devotees, from Navadvipa came Sri Pati, Sri Nidhi and others, from Santipura came Advaita Acharya Prabhu's son Acyutananda, Sri Krishna Mishra, and Sri Gopal as well as many others. From Ambika Kalna came Sri Hridaya Caitanya Prabhu and many other Vaishnavas. Gradually they all arrived in Kheturi Gram. King Santosa Datta arranged a colossal boat to carry everyone across the river. On the other side of the river, he had arranged for palanquins, oxcarts and other conveyances to carry the devotees into Kheturi Gram. Shrinivasa Acharya, Narottama Thakura, and Raja Santosa, went forward to cordially meet the devotees, and after showing them all due respect, they offered the devotees flower garlands, congratulated and welcomed them with great affection. All the devotees were given separate houses and servants. All those great Vaishnavas, who are the saviours of the world, graced the land of Kheturi Gram with the dust of their lotus feet, thus making transforming it into a great place of pilgrimage. The Sankirtana of those great souls created a thunderous sound that filled the heavens.

The gates of the temple and the doors of the houses were all well-decorated with banana leaves, waterpots, auspicious things like mango leaves, small waterpots decorated with auspicious signs, different kinds of flowers. All the big gateways and ornamental arches in the city, as well as all the doors of all the houses were decorated with colourful auspicious symbols like swastikas and six-pointed stars. The whole effect was one of unprecedented beauty and enchantment. Just before the festival stage in different places were mountain of all kinds of earthen pots, all kinds of silver vessels, and gigantic containers filled with milk, ghee, and thousands of earthen pots filled with yogurt. All these waterpots, earthen pots, silver vessels and giant containers as well as giant heaps of vegetables, produce, and fruit that were to be prepared for the festival combined to give the appearance of a great and beautiful mountain.

The day before the installation ceremony, the devotees, on the order of Sri Jahnavi Mata, began making the final preparations for the installation of the Deities on the holy appearance day of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. That evening they began the preliminary celebratory ceremonies by performing Sankirtana after Narottama Thakura had first offered *chandan* and flower garlands to Sri Jahnavi Mata and properly worshiped her. Thereafter all the devotees were decorated with garlands, and upon the request of Sri Narottama and Shrinivasa Acharya, Sri Raghunandana Thakura sang the *mangala carana*, the auspicious invocation. On and on into the middle of the night they devotees performed Sankirtana in order to make the atmosphere auspicious for the great festival that was to follow the next day. After chanting and dancing into the middle of the night the Vaishnavas finally took rest. Many thousands of people honoured *maha-prasadam* that night, on the eve of the Great Festival of Kheturi Gram.

The next morning, the installation ceremonies and the celebration of Caitanya Mahaprabhu's appearance, began with all the Vaishnavas performing *Maha-Sankirtana*. Shrinivasa Acharya presided over the auspicious *abhisheka* ceremony for the six deities that were being installed. About an hour before Shrinivasa Acharya was to perform the *abhisheka*, the six deities arrived within the temple. At that time, the local devotees, as well as those who had come from far away arrived there. The orators spoke, and the singers sang sweet songs. The expert dancers performed wonderful dances. The different devotees filled the four directions with the ecstatic sounds of the holy name of Krishna, and the glories of the Lord. In this way the four directions were filled with ecstasy.

According to the appropriate rules and regulations of the *sastras*, Shrinivasa Acharya performed the *abhisheka* ceremony, after which the deities were dressed in the finest cloth, and decorated with beautiful ornaments. After this, different kinds of sweet rice and wonderful vegetable preparations and drinks and thousands of varieties of foodstuffs were offered to the deities. The six deities, Sri Gauranga, Sri Vallabhikanta, Sri Krishna, Sri Vrajendramohan, Sri Radha Ramana, and Sri Radha Kanta, were offered all manner of wonderful preparations of *bhoga* in different pots. As the *bhoga* was offered, kirtan was performed, and then after the deities were satisfied in taking all the preparations to their heart's content, they were offered a soothing mouthwash, of Tambula, and then the deities were decorated with fragrant chandan and garlands. After this there was a great arotik, during which, in great ecstasy all the

devotees performed *Sankirtana*. After performing kirtan and dancing in great bliss, all the devotees, forgetting their material bodies fell to the ground offering prostrated *dandavats*.

After this, Shrinivasa Acharya offered the prasadam chandan and garlands to Jahnava Mata. Thereafter, he gave garlands and chandan to all the devotees present. Shrinivasa, Sri Narottama, and Sri Shyamananda Prabhu distributed all the sandalwood and garlands to all the devotees present, and when they were finished, on the order of Jahnava Mata, Sri Nrisingha Caitanya das decorated Shrinivasa, Shyamananda and Narottama with flower garlands and sandalwood pulp. Gradually the devotees took their seats in the kirtan hall. Jahnava Mata was seated on an elevated chair at the front of the hall. At that time, on the order of Jahnava Mata and Achutananda, Sri Narottama Thakura Mahashaya began to perform kirtan. Sri Gauranga Das, Sri Gokula Das, and Sri Vallabha Das responded and Devidas played the *mrdanga*.

Gauranga Das and the others were the most expert in the assembly gathered in that town of all the different kinds of singing and *kirtan*, and understood perfectly the different classical modulations of voice, performing music by ear, as well as fixed and unfixed melodies. The sweet and wonderful *kirtan* of Narottama Thakura with its sweet tune and unique style of voice filled the four directions and the heavens above, causing all the men and women weep to tears of *prema*, and they all sported in the waves of the Vaikuntha ocean of ecstasy. At that time, Sri Gauranga Mahaprabhu, along with his own personal associates appeared there and joined in the *Sankirtana*. "Who can describe the wealth of happiness felt by the devotees when, in the midst of their *kirtan*, appeared the munificent Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu Himself. Like a flash of lightning in the midst of a mass of beautiful clouds, Sri Caitanya Himself appeared within the crowd of devotees through divine manifestation." (Bhakti Ratnakar 10:572)

Appearance of Mahaprabhu during the kirtan at great festival at Kheturi Grama

Mahaprabhu appeared in their midst along with Sri Narahari, Sri Mukunda, Sri Gaouridas Pandit, Sri Advaita Acharya, Nityananda, Madhava Ghosh, Vasughosh, Govinda Ghosh, Acharya Purandara, Sri Mahesh, Sri Shankara, Shridhara, Sri Jagadish Pandit, Sri Yadunandana, Sri Kashishwara, and many of the other of the Lord's internal associates. They danced in a large company, with a cast of thousands, and in their midst, Sri Achyutananda, Sri Raghunandana, Sri Pati, and Sri Nidhi as well as many others joined together in the intense devotional ecstasy of that great kirtan of singing and dancing. "How overwhelmed in ecstasy were Advaita and Nityananda! How wonderful was the a circle the devotees made around Sri Caitanya, who danced in its middle. Shrinivasa Acharya and Narottama Thakura fully understood these pastimes as the wonderful manifestation of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's causeless mercy! It was an act of grace shown to Shrinivasa Acharya and Narottama Thakura. With this their satisfaction was complete. (Bhakti Ratnakar 10:607)

When Mahaprabhu, who is most affectionate to all devotees, appeared with his own eternal associates Shrinivasa Acharya and Narottama Thakura felt complete joy and satisfaction. After the Sankirtana, Sri Jahnava Mata offered the deities some red powder which is usually thrown by Hindus at the time of the Holi festival. After this, upon her order, the devotees began to play with the dye powder by throwing it all over each other in great joy. Everyone's body was covered with the red powder as the devotees threw it on each other. In this way, after the fun they had with the red dye powder, the evening approached and the time came to celebrate the appearance of Sri Gauranga with an *abhishek* ceremony. When the twilight came, the bathing ceremony began and it was conducted by Shrinivasa Acharya, as the devotees sang the *abhishek* song for Mahaprabhu's appearance ceremony and celebration.

The song went like this:

*phalguna purnima mangalera sima
prakata gokula indu
nadiya nagare prati ghare ghare
uthale anande sindhu
kiba kautuka paraspore
sacidevi bhale putra laiya kole*

*vilase sutika ghare
balake dehite dhaya caribhite
keha na dharaye dhrti
prahanandha kare ke cine kahare
asamkhya lokera gati
balaka madhuri dechi ankhi bhari
pasare apana deha
narahari kaya sacira tanaya
prakase ki navaneha*

"At an auspicious time during the full moon evening of the month of Phalguna, Krishna, the Lord of Gokula made his appearance within the town of Nadia as the ocean of ecstasy rose, flooding every house. At that time, everyone had great fun with one another. Sacidevi was healthy and happy as the baby played on her lap within the house of Jagannatha Suta. Morning, noon, evening, and night everyone wanted to see the child, to touch him and hold him. Accepting all kinds of difficulties to get a chance to see the new child, unlimited numbers of people went to the house of Jagannatha Mishra to visit.

Everyone packed their eyes to the brim with the charming vision of that sweet boy and seeing that beautiful sight, they forgot their own bodies. Narahari says that the divine appearance of the son of Saci, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, in this way increased everyone's affection and brought their hearts to the point of melting."

Everyone was fully absorbed in the ecstasy of *kirtan* day and night; no one could think of anything else. Finally, it was time for *mangala aroti*, and the aroti began. When the dancing and singing for Mangala aroti was finished, the Vaishnavas offered obeisances to one another and returned to their kutirs to take their morning baths. In this way, Sri Jahnava Mata quickly took bath, and in order to cook for the Deities, she entered the kitchen. Being expert in the science of cooking, Sri Jahnava Mata, within a short time had prepared various kinds of subjis and other vegetables dishes, sweets, cakes, and beverages. Shrinivasa Acharya performed the *abhishek* and the puja and offered the *bhoga* to the deities.

After the *bhoga* was offered and the bhoga arotik was finished, all the great souls present there were seated for taking mahaprasada. Sri Jahnava Mata distributed prasadam with her own hand to the assembled devotees. A great sound of "Hari Hari!" filled the air from time to time as the great devotees assembled there honoured prasadam. After all the mahants were finished taking prasadam, Sri Jahnava Mata requested Sri Narottama, Shrinivasa and Shyamananda Prabhu to take prasadam. When everyone else was finished, Sri Jahnava Mata herself took prasadam.

Outside the kirtan hall, King Santosa Datta distributed various kinds of *maha-prasadam* to the full satisfaction of the thousands of people who had arrived for the festival. When all the friends and relatives of the *brahmanas* who were present there, as well as all the unexpected and uninvited guests finally finished taking prasadam, then the King himself took maha-prasadam at home with his personal entourage.

On the second day, Raja Santosa Datta especially requested all the devotees to cook within their kutirs all different kinds of *prasadam* to be offered as before to the deities in a great feast.

On the third day, as the devotees in their places began to make preparations to leave, Raja Santosa Datta with tears in his eyes gave the devotees gold coins, cloth, different kinds of waterpots, and offered all the devotees his respects. All the devotees bestowed many blessings upon the king and embraced him with great affection, before bidding him farewell and beginning their journeys home. Sri Jahnava Mata, accompanied by her own entourage began her journey to Vrindavana. Shrinivasa Acharya, and Shyamananda Prabhu remained behind in Kheturi Grama for a few days longer, and then they too left for their own homes, and bade farewell to Kheturi Gram.

After the great festival in Kheturi, Srila Narottama Thakur's fame spread to the four directions. Ram Krishna Acharya and Ganganarayana Cakravarti as well as many other learned devotees throughout the area soon took shelter of the lotus feet of Srila Narottama Thakura.

In the town of Gopal Pur lived a *brahmana* named Sri Vipradas. One day, Narottama Thakura suddenly arrived at his home. Vipradas was extremely happy. He offered him a respectful welcome, offering him a seat and the hospitality of a humble *brahmana*, in accordance with Vedic tradition. In the place where Vipradas had his rice paddy stored a terrifying snake lived. Out of fear of the snake he didn't dare to go inside that storehouse. Vipradas told Narottama Das of his fear. Hearing this, Narottama Thakura smiled a little bit. He said, "Think nothing of it." And when the Thakura opened the door to the storehouse, the snake had vanished."

When Narottama came out of the storehouse, it could be seen that he had with him the deities of Vishnupriya and Sri Gaurasundara on his lap." (Bhakti Ratnakar 10:202) Everyone saw a great miracle - out of the storehouse Narottama Thakura emerged holding deities of Sri Gauranga and Vishnupriya on his lap. Taking those deities of Sri Gauranga Nityananda with him, Sri Narottama Thakura went to Kheturi Grama, where he installed them to be worshipped. At present that deity is found in a place called Gambilat.

The Glories of Narottama

Once when Narottama Thakura passed by the school a learned *smarta brahmana* insulted Narottama Thakura in front of his students. Blaspheming him again and again, he called Narottama Thakura a *sudra*. After this offense, all the limbs of the *brahmana* began melting away from leprosy. Consumed by his incurable disease and seeing no hope for recovery the *brahmana* went to throw himself in the Ganges and die. That night Durga Devi came to the *brahmana* in a dream and said, "You fool. You have considered a great *maha-bhagavata*, a pure devotee, to be a *sudra*. Even if you die and take many, many millions of births you cannot be delivered. But if you simply go to him and beg forgiveness at his lotus feet, everything will be all right."

The next day, in the afternoon, the *brahmana* went with a piece of cloth tied around his neck to indicate great humility, and in complete submission, weeping and weeping, fell before the lotus feet of Narottama Thakur, begging his forgiveness. Gradually, as a result of his association with Narottama, his leprosy healed. Narottama Thakura advised him to engage himself in Krishna bhajan. Gradually he became greatly devoted to Narottama Thakura.

One day, Narottama Thakura and Sri Ramachandra Kaviraja went to the river Padmavati to take bath and at that time they saw two young *brahmanas* herding many goats and sheep. Narottama Thakura asked the two *brahmanas* if they were making their young lives successful by performing *hari bhajan*. The two young *brahmana* boys listened very attentively. Seeing the beautiful divine forms of Narottama Thakura and Ramachandra Kaviraj, and hearing their sweet words, they approached the place where they stood on the banks of the river and in a very humble mood offered their respectful prayers and obeisances. Narottama Thakura asked them who they were and they introduced themselves, saying, "We come from the village of Goyasa Gram, and we are the sons of a Zamindar named Sivananda Acharya. Our names are Harinam and Ramkrishna. At our house, at present Durga Puja is being conducted, and on the order of our father we are bringing all these goats and sheep to be slaughtered. Please give us some advice as to what we should do."

Seeing the humble mood of the two sons of *brahmanas*, Sri Thakura Mahashaya smiled sweetly and began to speak as before on the truths of the Bhagavata, explaining what the Vedas say about how *karma-kanda* is often performed in the modes of passion and ignorance, and how those whose minds are contaminated by the lower modes are candidates for hell. The Vedas explain that the practitioners of karma receive some piety and as a result go to the heavenly planets for a short time, but having once gone to heaven for a short time, they fall into the hellish worlds to suffer. One who, being interested in material enjoyment, is captivated by the sweet words of the Vedas that promise material enjoyment has his

intelligence covered. Spending his life in material pursuits, such a person becomes a killer of animals, or a killer of the soul, and after death falls down into hell. All souls are the energy of Krishna. One who sees the *paramatma* everywhere, who is free from violence to others, who has no false ego, and who always worships the Supreme Lord becomes free from repeated birth and death and attains the liberated position of divine service at the lotus feet of the Lord."

Hearing these words from the mouth of Srila Narottama Thakura, the two *brahmana* boys fell before his holy feet and said, "Please bless these most fallen young *brahmanas* with the dust of your lotus feet." The Thakur then touched his hand to their heads, saying, "May you attain Krishna-bhakti."

At this, the young *brahmana* boys set the goats and sheep free, bathed in the Padma river, and went with Sri Ramachandra Kaviraja and Narottama Thakura to the temple of Shriman Mahaprabhu. That day, after taking prasada they again heard from Sri Narottama Thakura and Ramachandra Kaviraja about different aspects of the absolute truth. The next day, after shaving their heads, the two young *brahmanas* took initiation in the Radha-Krishna mantra. Harinam accepted the mantra from Ramachandra Kaviraja and Ram-Krishna from Narottama Thakura.

After some time, Shivananda Acharya began searching and searching for his sons until he found that they had been seen in Kheturi Gram where they were living as disciples in the *ashrama* of Narottama Thakura. Shivananda Acharya could not contain his anger.

A few days later, the two brothers returned home. Their foreheads were marked with the *tilak* of a Vaishnava, their throats decorated with tulasi mala, the 12 parts of their bodies marked with Vishnu *tilak*, their heads shaved, wearing the shikha of a devotee of Krishna. Seeing all this Shivananda raged with the hot fury of an uncontrolled fire. He told them: "O fools! Where does it say in the *sastra* that the position of a Vaishnavas is greater than the position of a *brahmana* or that by becoming a Vaishnava one is better than a *brahmana*? You have neglected Durga for so long, but your life is useless without Durga. Moreover, if the Vaishnavas make disciples out of *brahmanas* it will lead to chaos in society; the *brahmanas* will lose their position, and if the pandits are defeated, religion will be destroyed and everything will be lost."

Hearing these words of their father, the two young *brahmana* boys spoke as follows: "On the other hand, that "religion" or "right work" which causes violence to others, and ends only misery, cannot properly be called religion or proper activity. Rather it must be called irreligion and wrong activity. O father! Giving up the worship of Shalagrama *Narayana*, why have you established the worship of Durga-devi and other demigods? Giving careful thought to the conclusions surrounding the performance of Sri Narayana *bhajana* you should understand the worship of Shiva and Durga to be a useless waste of time.

Shivananda Acharya and smarta pandits there were thus defeated by the conclusions given by the *brahmana* boys. Shivananda began to deeply consider: "If a great pandit were here, he could defeat all this and belittle the position of Vaishnava dharma by counter-argument and word jugglery. Shivananda Acharya brought a great mahapandit from Mithila named Murari. At that time, for the purpose of having a debate, he called for his sons and told them that he wanted them to explain before a public assembly their conclusions that a Vaishnava is better than a *brahmana*.

Sri Harinam and Sri Rama Krishna remembering the lotus feet of their guru maharaja explained the siddhanta or conclusions of the Bhagavatam, and the arguments of the smartas were so utterly cut to pieces that when it was his turn to speak the great smarta Mahapandit Murari was unable to put forward any arguments in response. When it was all over, the mahapandit fled the assembly in great embarrassment with his head held low and accepted the occupation of a beggar.

That night, as he lay defeated, Shivananda Acharya began to meditate on Durga Devi. Gradually he fell asleep and Durga Devi appeared to him in a dream. At that time, she said: "O Shivananda! Sri Hari is the master of everyone. He is the way, the truth and the light. Those whom he covers with ignorance turn to my worship. And I assure the destruction of those who worship me. Those who aren't Krishna-minded are demons. On the other hand, those who are dear devotees of Krishna are really dear to me. For your own sake, if you want to become free from the offenses you have committed and attain auspiciousness, you had better go to Narottama Thakura and beg forgiveness from his lotus feet. Otherwise, I will destroy you, you offender of Vaishnavas!" After speaking these words of chastisement to Shivananda Acharya, Durga Devi disappeared.

Ganganarayana Chakravarti was a famous and highly learned brahmana living in Gambhila Gram. He heard from the lips of Narottama Thakura the siddhanta of the Goswamis with great attention and took shelter of the lotus feet of Narottama where he later studied very deeply the scriptures of the Goswamis.

There was another *brahmana* named Jagannatha Acharya who was a worshipper of Durga. One day in a dream Durga appeared to him and said, "O you simple brahmana. Go to Narottama Thakur. Take shelter of his lotus feet. Practice Krishna bhajan and you will achieve the highest good fortune. Krishna is my master and my guru. Not a blade of grass moves without his wish."

Jagannatha Acharya, after his afternoon bath, went to Kheturi Gram and offered his dandavats at the lotus feet of Narottama Thakura, explaining all that Durga had told him in the dream. Hearing this, the Thakura smiled slightly and said, "You are very fortunate to have attained Krishna's mercy." On an auspicious day the Thakura initiated him in the Radha-Krishna mantra. Sri Jagannatha Acharya became a very dear and confidential disciple of Narottama Thakura.

Seeing the glories of Srila Narottama Thakura, the society of smarta *brahmanas* roasted with envy. A large faction of them went to the Raja Nrishinga and petitioned him for redress. They told him: "Maharaja! If you don't rescue the brahmanas, your reputation will be ruined and your death will be assured. The son of Raja Krishnananda Datta, Narottama Thakura, is a sudra - and yet he dares to make disciples of the brahmanas. If this goes on, we shall all be drowned like the members of the Yadu dynasty."

Raja Narasingha said, "I shall protect you. But please tell me, what is to be done?"

The brahmanas said we shall all go to Kheturi Gram along with the great and famous, the world-conquering scholar Mahadigvijay Pandit Sri Rupa Narayana and defeat Narottama. With that great pandit as our leader, Narottama will not be able to say anything. You please assist us in all this."

The king, Raja Nrishinga said, "I myself shall accompany you every step of the way. In this way, that group of brahmanas along with the great and learned world-conquering pandit Rupa Narayana began their journey to Kheturi Gram. As they were traveling on the road someone heard the news and went to Kheturi Gram where he informed Srila Ramachandra Kaviraja and Narottama Thakura.

When Sri Ramachandra Kaviraja and Sri Ganganarayana Chakravarti heard all this, they became very disturbed. Thereafter, after some inquiry, the two of them came to know that the party of smarta pandits, were about to arrive in the marketplace of a town called Kumara Pura, and that after resting there for one day, they would reach Kheturi Gram the following day. Ramachandra and Ganganarayana quickly went to that marketplace in Kumarpura and the two of them set up two different shops. Sri Ramachandra Kaviraja set up a stall for selling clay pots and Ganganarayana Chakravarti set himself up in a stall selling pan and betel nut.

In this way, along with Raja Narashinga, the smarta pandits arrived in the marketplace of Kumarpura and set up their camp near the shops. The disciples of the pandits went to buy some clay pots for cooking with and went to the pottery shop. The potter (who was Ramachandra Kaviraja) began speaking to them in pure Sanskrit. The disciples of the pandits began speaking in Sanskrit also, and soon they began arguing back and forth in Sanskrit and were defeated. In the same way, when the students went to purchase pan and betel nuts from the shop of the pan-walla (Ganganarayana Chakravarti) he spoke to them in pure Sanskrit. They also began to argue. Gradually their teachers arrived at the place where the argument was going on and found themselves unable to reply to the arguments of the pan-walla and the clay pot walla. Finally, the king, Raja Narasingha, arrived on the scene the great pandit Rupa Narayana. At that time a great uproar of argumentation filled the four directions. In the presence of the king, the potter and the pan-walla defeated all the smarta brahmanas, including Rupa Narayana. Raja Narsingha made some inquiries and came to know that the pan-walla and potter were disciples of Narottama Das. At that time, he said to the pandits when you are unable to defeat a common, ordinary disciple of Narottama in the matter of siddhanta, how will you defeat Narottama himself?"

The smarta pandits were silent. Realizing their defeat, they made preparations to return to their own villages.

That evening, King Raja Narasingha and Sri Rupa Narayana saw Durgadevi in a dream. She told them, "If you don't accept the shelter of Narottama's lotus feet, I will cut you all to pieces with my sharpened sword." The following morning Raja Narasingha and Rupa Narayana arrived at the place of Narottama Thakura. Narottama Thakura received them with great affection and with all due respect and cordiality, offering them a seat. He said, "I am very fortunate to have the company of such highly learned and noble personages such as your good selves."

Raja Narashinga and Rupa Narayana, were overwhelmed at Narottama's polite and gentle Vaisnava behaviour and fell prostrate at his lotus feet begging forgiveness for their offenses. At length, upon being hearing of the pronouncement that Durga Devi had given them, Narottama smiled very sweetly. Thereafter, within a few days, he initiated them in the he initiated them in the Radha Krishna mantra.

The Disappearance of Sri Narottama Das Thakura

Srila Narottama Thakura was constantly absorbed in singing the glories of Sri Gauranga and Nityananda. Day after day many atheists, agnostics, offenders, Siva worshippers, followers of Durga, dry logicians, mental speculators and karmis were purified by the touch of his holy lotus feet. Taking the blessings of Narottama, Sri Ramachandra Kaviraja went to Sri Vrindavana Dhama. After a few months there, he entered into the eternal *lila* of Sri Radha and Govinda.

This extremely terrible and unbearable news came to Shrinivasa Acharya, and unable to bear the separation from his dear disciple, he too passed away from this earth and entered into the eternal pastimes of Radha and Govinda. Hearing all this terrible news, Srila Narottama plunged into the ocean of separation where he began to drown. In the great and unbearable agony of separation he wrote the song, "*ye anilo premadhana*." Barely able to keep afloat in the ocean of separation, Srila Narottama Thakura went near banks of the Ganges in the village called Gambhilaya and entered a temple of Mahaprabhu.

Narottama ordered the devotees to perform kirtan. The devotees began performing Sankirtana. After Sankirtana, Narottama Thakura went to the river's edge, and with tears in his eyes took darshan of the Ganges, offering his obeisances again and again. At that time, he entered the waters of the Ganges. After entering a short distance into the water, he requested all the devotees to fill the four directions with the loud chanting of the holy name in Sankirtana. At that time, Sri Ramakrishna Acharya and Sri Ganganarayana Cakravarti began two kirtans in two different places. In the midst of all this, the Thakura told two of them, "Pour the waters of the Ganges over my body." Saying this, everyone was immersed in the waves of

Sankirtana. As the kirtan went on they were just ready to take pour Ganges water over the body of Sri Narottama Thakura, when just at that moment Srila Narottama Das Thakura, who was absorbed in chanting the holy name in Sankirtana, merged into the waters of the Ganges and vanished from worldly view. His disappearance day is celebrated on the *Krishna Panchami* day of the month of *Kartika*.

Directions to reach Yajigrama:

Yajigrama is 4 kms from Katwa, viz. 1 hour from Navadvipa town or 2 hours' drive from Mayapur via road trip. From Navadvipa town a direct local train runs every hour. The train, although usually crowded, is quickest way to reach Katwa compared to road journey.

Useful Resources:

Prarthana Book - Prayers of Loving Devotion: <https://www.amazon.com/Prarthana-Prayers-Devotion-Narotaama-Thakura-ebook/dp/B00D3LJ1T4>
<https://www.touchstonemedia.com/shop/prarthana-ebook/>

Downloadable:

https://ebooks.iskcondesiretree.com/pdf/Gaudiya_Books%20Narottama_dasa_Thakura/Narottama_dasa_Thakura_Prarthana.pdf

Sri Prema Bhakti Candrika, the Moon-rays of Loving Devotion:

https://www.amazon.com/Bhakti-Candrika-Moon-rays-Loving-Devotion-ebook/dp/B00D3LJ5OK/ref=pd_sbs_1?pd_rd_w=cBEmx&pf_rd_p=c52600a3-624a-4791-b4c4-3b112e19fbbc&pf_rd_r=JDRXXAGQAW9HYBTfY&pd_rd_r=57050b1c-d73a-4bcd-ae30-915187753e48&pd_rd_wg=b1XcO&pd_rd_i=B00D3LJ5OK&psc=1

Downloadable:

https://ebooks.iskcondesiretree.com/pdf/Gaudiya_Books%20Narottama_dasa_Thakura/Narottama_dasa_Thakura_Sri_Prema_bhakti_candrika.pdf

Sri Gauranga Bari Temple at Katwa where Lord Caitanya took Sannyasa:

<http://www.dandavats.com/?p=25465>

Holy Pilgrimages: www.Holy-Pilgrimages.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/HolyPilgrimages

Holy Dham: www.HolyDham.com

**Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare |
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare ||**